



Prairie Postings Oglala, Buffalo Gap and the Ft. Pierre National Grasslands

PLEASE JOIN US!

NOVEMBER 14, 2012 AT 10:00 A.M.

THE NATIONAL GRASSLANDS VISITOR CENTER

708 MAIN STREET; WALL, S.D.

Please plan to attend our next 'on-the-ground' meeting to discuss collaborative efforts and partnerships to help manage multiple uses of our public lands. The public meeting's focus is on the proposed Cain Creek Land Exchange and we will discuss:

1. The proposed land parcels for exchange and review maps.
2. Management options for the lands to be acquired by the proposed land exchange.
3. The schedule plans for the draft Environmental Assessment and public comment period.

Cain Creek Land Exchange Proposed

The Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands and The Nature Conservancy are proposing a land exchange in the Cain Creek area. The primary purpose is to consolidate land ownership where private and National Forest System lands are intermixed, to acquire black footed ferret habitat in Conata Basin and to improve

prairie dog management and grazing strategies. Federal lands proposed for exchange lie on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland between Hot Springs and Kadoka, SD.



Inside this issue:

Comments Welcome for Proposed Sand Creek Land Exchange	2
Range Improvements and Heritage Review	2
Stocking Levels Drought Formula Guideline	2
Black-footed Ferret Census Remains Down Due to Plague	3
Wall Has a New District Ranger—Welcome Alan Anderson!	3
A Special Thanks to All Fire Partners	3
Other Announcements & Contact Information	4

Comments Welcome for Proposed Sand Creek Land Exchange on the Oglala National Grassland

The Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands is seeking public comments on the proposed Sand Creek land exchange north of Crawford, Nebraska in the Cottonwood Creek area.

The proposed exchange includes two parcels of US Forest Service System Lands on the Oglala National Grassland totaling approximately 760 acres, for two parcels totaling approximately 800 acres of private lands that are now owned by Walter Whitcher.

The primary purpose of the exchange is to consolidate land ownership and create contiguous boundaries to improve land management effi-

ciencies. All proposed parcels of land lie in Dawes and Sioux Counties, Nebraska and are on the Oglala National Grasslands. The Draft Environmental Assessment is posted on the Forest Services website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/nebraska/landmanagement/projects>

Comments are welcome and can be provided in person, online, phone, fax or e-mail by midnight on November 19, 2012.

Comments may be delivered or mailed to 125 N. Main Street, Chadron, NE 69337; faxed to (308) 432-0309 or electronic comments may be sent to: comments-rocky-mountain-nebraska@fs.fed.us and write "Sand Creek Land Exchange" in the subject line.



Artifact found after
Region 23 Fire

Range Improvements & Heritage Review

A variety of Federal Laws require environmental analyses be completed on any actions that involve ground disturbances to assess potential impacts on resources, such as cultural and threatened and endangered species. While some of the analysis can be streamlined for temporary improvements, a full analysis is required for all new permanent improvements. The environmental analysis must be done before a new project can be started & depending on project complexity, may take up to two years to complete.

Stocking Levels Drought Formula Guideline

$$[(2011 \text{ inches precipitation} \times 0.25) + (2012 \text{ inches precipitation} \times 0.75)] / \text{long term average precipitation} \times 100\% \times \text{average AUMs stocked} = \text{potential 2013 AUMs.}$$

◆ *Please note that all situations will be evaluated on a site-specific basis*

Land management practices must change during seasons stressed by drought, fire or other catastrophic events. To ensure objectivity and consistency during drought events, the Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands adjusts stocking levels using a formula as a guideline. The formula is taken from, "Drought Management on Range and Pastureland" and was developed by the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service, Publication number: EC91-123. The formula predicts forage production and recommended stocking levels based on the previous two years precipitation. The recommended stocking levels may be adjusted based on local conditions such as overall range condition, water resources, livestock distribution, grazing history, number of pastures, precipitation amounts and timing for the 2013 season.



Black-footed Ferret Census Remains Down Due to Plague

Over the past several weeks, scientists, wildlife biologist and many volunteers have been collecting census data in the Conata Basin area for the black-footed ferret (BFF), a threatened and endangered species. Since epizootic plague emerged in Conata Basin in 2008, BFF numbers have declined dramatically. Predation and food challenges have also been pressuring the animal's successful reintroduction.

Preliminary data from this year's census indicates the BFF and prairie dog populations in the Conata Basin area have stabilized at about 20% of 2007 levels, as plague areas expand outside of the basin.

Forest Service personnel and partners continue to try and preserve BFF popula-

tion. Because prairie dogs are the primary food source of BFFs, some prairie dog towns in prime BFF habitat have been dusted to kill fleas that spread plague. This has significantly reduced ferret and prairie dog mortality in those areas.

Additionally BFFs captured during population studies have been inoculated for plague. A 1998 shooting closure has been expanded this year to include all areas managed for the BFF. Research, including field trials, will continue this year in support of developing an oral plague vaccine for prairie dogs. If successful, this vaccine could reduce the cost of plague control and give land managers more flexibility in dealing with it.



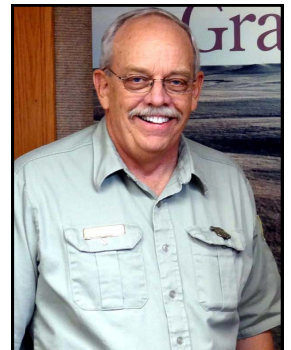
Threatened & Endangered Species, Black-footed Ferrets

Wall Has a New District Ranger—Welcome Alan Anderson!

Alan Anderson may be the new District Ranger at Wall, but he's already well known because of two Wall Acting Ranger roles.

Alan spent the most recent three years as Nebraska National Forests & Grassland's Forest Engineer and nine years as supervisory civil engineer for the Black Hills National Forest. Prior to this he worked 2 years as road con-

struction inspector with the South Dakota Department of Transportation and 27 years as a Commissioned Officer for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration working in marine engineering and hydrographic surveying. This work put him in all US states and coastal waters and several Canadian provinces. His last assignment was Commanding Officer of the NOAA Ship RAINIER, a 231 foot survey vessel, conducting hydrographic surveys in the coastal water of Alaska.



A Special Thanks to All Fire Partners!

Unfortunately the Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands had an exceptionally busy fire season. We want to publically thank our partners:

Volunteer Fire Departments

All of Our Communities

All Media Partners, including radio, newspapers and television

Other State Agencies, including Law Enforcement, Emergency Management, Fire Marshals, Game & Parks, State Forest Services

Other Federal Agencies, including BLM, National Park Service, US Fish & Wildlife and the US Forest Service.





**NEBRASKA NATIONAL FORESTS &
GRASSLANDS, US FOREST SERVICE**

125 N. Main Street
Chadron, NE 69337

Phone: 308-432-0300
Fax: 308-432-0309
E-mail: cdjanssen@fs.fed.us

***Prairie Postings: To help enhance collaboration &
partnerships among grassland users &
stakeholders***

Find us on the web!
www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska

Other Announcements:

- ◆ Changes will be coming to Railroad Buttes soon, including assessment of 'close calls' between recreational shooters and Off-Highway-Vehicle riders; as well as planned improvements for the parking area.
- ◆ Stage II Fire Restrictions continue to be in place across the Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands
- ◆ Questions about proposed land exchanges? Please call:
Call Cindy Hockelberg
(605) 673-9238

Contact Information:

The Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands total land area is 1,062,500 acres located in both Nebraska & South Dakota. The Nebraska National Forest, Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest & the Oglala National Grassland are located in Nebraska and total 351,500 acres. The Buffalo Gap National Grassland & Fort Pierre National Grassland are located in South Dakota and total 711,000 acres. The Ranger District phone numbers are:

- ◆ *Bessey Ranger District, Halsey, NE (308) 533-2257*
- ◆ *Fall River Ranger District, Hot Springs, SD (605) 745-4107*
- ◆ *Fort Pierre Ranger District, Fort Pierre, SD (605) 224-5517*
- ◆ *Pine Ridge Ranger District, Chadron, NE (308) 432-0300*
- ◆ *Wall Ranger District, Wall, SD (605) 279-2125*